United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Japanese United Nations volunteer murdered by "unknown individuals" in Cambodia; interpreter dies later of gun wounds; Secretary-General meets with Prime Minister of India in Bangkok.

+ Two Nigerian UNPROFOR soldiers killed and one wounded by Serb militiamen at border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to United Nations spokesman.

+ Democratic People's Republic of Korea says "so-called nuclear problem" should be resolved through negotiation between itself and United States, not in "United Nations arena".

+ Security Council decides that there is "no agreement" to lift air and arms embargo against Libya imposed by Council last April.

+ Human Rights Committee considers report on Iran's compliance with International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

+ First session of Commission on Science and Technology for Development to open at Headquarters on Monday, 12 April.

+ Preparatory Committee for 1995 World Summit for Social Development to begin organizational session at Headquarters on Monday, 12 April.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, at the end of his two-day visit to Cambodia, deplored the murder this morning of a Japanese United Nations volunteer in that country by unknown individuals.

In a statement issued at Headquarters in New York, the Secretary-General said he had learned with the greatest sadness of the "most unfortunate and cruel murder" of 25 year-old Mr. Asuhito Nakata, a District Electoral Supervisor in the Kompong Thom province, who had been working for the cause of peace and democracy in Cambodia since last July. Mr. Nakata was driving a vehicle belonging to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

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(UNTAC) with his interpreter, who died later in a hospital in Bangkok from bullet wounds.

In an address to UNTAC staff today, the Secretary-General said a political and economic transformation was underway in Cambodia. Refugees had returned and five million people had registered to vote in the elections on 23 May. Investment was also returning; the international community would spend $800 million on reconstruction in Cambodia, twice as much as had been requested a year ago. The operation would be an example to similar operations around the world.

The Secretary-General paid tribute to the people -- Cambodians and non-Cambodians, military personnel and civilians -- who had given their lives in the service of UNTAC. The security situation had deteriorated in recent weeks, but the United Nations would not be intimidated by violence or threats. UNTAC was doing all it could to strengthen security and staff had a responsibility to act sensibly, he said.

The Secretary-General later left Phnom Penh for Bangkok, where he met with the Prime Minister of India. They exchanged views on the role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War Period and discussed Cambodia, Somalia and South Africa.

Yesterday, in an address to the Supreme National Council of Cambodia, the Secretary-General said UNTAC was very important for the country, the United Nations and the international community. The Organization had provided vast resources to UNTAC; the Cambodian people and their leaders had to show moderation and cooperation, and to abandon inflexible positions, in the interest of national reconciliation and renewal.

UNTAC was working to organize free and fair elections on 23 May, and to ensure that voting -- by secret ballot -- and vote-counting were carried out accurately and safely, he said. A neutral political environment was required; parties should face each other with words and ideas, not rifles.

The Secretary-General expressed regret that the party of Democratic Kampuchea had refused to fulfil its obligations under the Paris Agreements of 1991. That refusal had been deplored by the Security Council. The weight, political will and power of the international community should not be under-estimated. He went on to recall that elections had been held in Angola under international control, but the results had not been respected and the war had restarted. That tragedy should be a lesson to all.

Addressing the people of Cambodia in a television interview, the Secretary-General said Prince Norodom Sihanouk had assured him that he would support the elections and the results. The people should vote with a clear conscience for the parties of their choice, for the sake of peace and prosperity in Cambodia.

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Two Nigerian soldiers serving with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) were killed and one wounded by Serb Militiamen at the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina today.

According to a United Nations spokesman, the armed Serbs had demanded money from the Nigerian sentries and opened fire when the Nigerians refused to comply. The spokesman said the incident was a robbery, not a politically connected event.

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The "so-called nuclear problem" was not a matter to be discussed in the United Nations arena, but a problem that should be resolved through negotiation between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, that country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said.

In a statement to the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations, Pak Gil Yon, said that while the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had never taken issue with South Africa and Israel for developing and manufacturing nuclear weapons, the agency was raising "fictitious" issues of "nuclear suspicion" and "inconsistency" with the nuclear programme of North Korea. That was "an illegal act without validity and legal ground", he said.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea warned that it would be compelled to take "effective self-defensive measures" if the Security Council were to impose sanctions against it, the statement said.

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The Human Rights Committee, which ended its session today in New York, has been considering a report on Iran's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Committee discussed the country's special courts, including revolutionary tribunals, punishments, such as the amputation of limbs for robbery and the death penalty for drug smuggling, and the fatwa, or religious edict, against Salman Rushdie. The situation of the Baha'i religion was also highlighted. One Committee member asserted that Iran's Islamic laws contradicted the Covenant and that "inhuman" punishments should be stopped.

Hussein Mehrpour, special envoy of the Judicature of Iran, said the Koran set forth 14 considerations for implementing physical punishments, taking into account the offender's economic situation. The death penalty had been imposed for drug smuggling because armed traffickers threatened Iran; penalties might be reduced if smuggling declined. He said Salman Rushdie had insulted Islam and Muslims, and wondered what would have happened had such blasphemy been committed against a Western religion.

Sirous Nasseri, leader of the Iranian delegation, said Iran's laws were compatible with the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; apart from

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references to Islam, its Constitution was broadly similar to other nations' Constitutions, he said.

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The Security Council has decided that there was "no agreement that the necessary conditions existed for a modification" of the sanctions against Libya which took effect last April. The decision was made public in a statement issued following consultations by the Council this morning.

The Council imposed on 15 April last year an air and arms embargo against Libya when that country refused to cooperate in establishing responsibility for the 1988 downing of Pan Am flight 103 and UTA flight 772.

The Council is reviewing the sanctions against Libya every 120 days.

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The scientific and technological implications of sustainable development and the transfer of environmentally sound energy technologies are among the issues to be discussed at the first session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, which will be held from 12 to 23 April at Headquarters.

The mandate of the newly-established functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council includes promoting international cooperation in the field of science and technology for development. The Commission will also formulate United Nations policy guidelines relating to scientific and technological activities, stemming from the Vienna Programme of Action for Science and Technology for Development.

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The Preparatory Committee for the 1995 World Summit for Social Development will hold its organizational session at Headquarters from 12 to 16 April, to prepare the discussion of the major issues to be examined by the Summit. Those issues are: enhancement of social integration, reduction and alleviation of poverty, and expansion of productive employment.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali highlighted the importance of the Summit in his 1992 report on the work of the United Nations Organization, when he said: "I am confident that the Summit would provide leadership at the highest level for a shared world-wide commitment to put people at the centre of development and international cooperation. It would also surely act as a source of inspiration for new ideas and proposals towards the development of a more comprehensive approach to actions of the United Nations system in the social sphere."

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